

Educator Credentialing System RFP Questions and Answers

Questions from Bidders' Conference and Email

1. The proposal due date is listed as April 28, 2011 and the date in which the system needs to be in production is listed as May 1, 2012. When is the DOE expected to announce the award?
 - a. May, 2011
2. Would it be possible for bidders to receive a version of the RFP in Microsoft Word format, or is the PDF version the only one that is available?
 - a. The Microsoft Word version is available upon request to bill.hurwitch@maine.gov.
3. Due to questions that will inevitably arise after the Pre-Bid and during the preparation of a proposal, is the State open to extending the deadline for questions to March 15 given the fact that doing so still leaves five weeks before proposal submission?
 - a. No
4. What is the total number of license types needed?
 - a. Endorsements include but are not limited to administrative (10), education specialists (9), teaching (53) and career and technical education licenses (58).
5. How much is budgeted for this system, including professional services to implement?
 - a. The SLDS ARRA Grant budget for the system is approximately \$1,200,000.
6. Can you provide the names of countries that will be eligible to participate in this tender?
 - a. There are no country restrictions for bidders.
7. Will there be any extension to the bidding deadline?
 - a. No extension is planned at this time.
8. Will you release a list of all questions submitted by interested bidders and their answers?
 - a. Yes
9. Have other bidders provided on-site demos? If so, can you please provide the names of the other companies?
 - a. Hupp Information Technologies and True North Logic provided demonstrations prior to the release of the RFP.
10. Are web services the preferred method of interfacing the State desires between existing third party systems and the new credentialing system?
 - a. Yes
11. Can you provide more information regarding user counts?
 - a. There are approximately 40,000 active users employed by the schools plus applicants, MDOE credentialing staff (6) and users from the 16 Maine degree granting institutions.
12. Can the state please provide background on the current credentialing processes, including the types of forms / workflows that are included (e.g., new teacher in-state, renewal, new teacher out-of-state, etc.)? Also, what is the relative throughput for each type of workflow per year?
 - a. Application information may be found at this link:
http://www.maine.gov/education/forms/fingerprint/letter_1.htm

The forms used by the certification office (other than the teacher/administrator renewal form) may be found at this link:

<http://www.maine.gov/education/forms/cert.htm>

The State issues approximately 25,000 certificates authorizations and approvals each year.

13. Has the state completed workflow diagrams / outlines for the current credentialing processes? If so, can some sample(s) be supplied to vendors?
 - a. There are no workflow diagrams for the legacy system.
14. Is there a difference between certifications and endorsements?
 - a. The certification office issues 10 different administrator certificates, 9 different educational specialist certificates and teacher certificates with multiple endorsements (math, French, general elementary, etc.)
The office also issues educational technician (paraprofessional) authorizations with up to 8 different level codes.
The office also issues fingerprint approvals to those individuals who need only document having gone through an approved background check process with the Maine DOE.
15. Is there a preference for a COTS solution?
 - a. No
16. Will RFP responses that propose custom development be considered?
 - a. Yes
17. Is there a preference for perpetual or subscription licensing?
 - a. No
18. Can the State detail the process of how documents are handled today and the current flow until they are scanned?
 - a. The only process completely covered by a scanning system of storage is the fingerprint approvals process.
Most other processes continue to be a paper-based filing system unless scanned for lapsed/archival purposes.
19. Other than a Project Manager, will MDOE identify other dedicated Department personnel for this project?
 - a. The project team will include MDOE Educator Certification Program staff and other MDOE and OIT resources as needed.
20. 1.1 - To what extent does the State require vendors to comply with both the FERPA and HIPAA Standards?
 - a. The system must meet all FERPA and HIPAA requirements.
21. 1.1 - Can the State please clarify how the new system fits into the overall view of the recruiting process in Maine?
 - a. There is no established recruiting process. The credentialing system will facilitate the application process.
22. 1.1-The MDOE mentioned, “the ability to accept test scores from vendors and transcript files directly into the system to reduce processing time”. Can the MDOE provide elaboration regarding how and what is accepted into the system? (e.g. – file formats, upload process, etc.)
 - a. See Section 2.7 of the RFP.

23. 1.1 - Will Smart Client applications be considered, or will only 100% web based applications be considered?
 - a. The preference is for 100% web-based.
24. 1.5 - Can you provide a list of bidder's conference vendors?
 - a. A list of bidders' conference participants will not be provided.
25. 1.5 - Would it be possible to get a copy of the recording from the bidders' conference?
 - a. The bidders' conference was not recorded.
26. 1.6.e - What is the deadline for written questions?
 - a. 4:00 PM (Eastern), March 8th, 2011.
27. 1.13 - Disclosure of Proposal Content: Is release of the scoring of every vendor's proposal including scoring on the proposal itself and on subsequent interviews also included in this disclosure statement?
 - a. Yes.
28. 2.2 - Are there geographic requirements (too close/too far) for the location of the data center?
 - a. No.
29. 2.2 - It is stated that funding for this initiative is part of the 2009 ARRA Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems grant. As such this is 'one-time' funding. It is also stated the DOE is open to hosted solutions. As hosted solutions carry recurring costs (typically annually) is the DOE prepared to provide recurring funding to support this initiative if it were to be hosted by a 3rd party? If so, how much is the DOE prepared to fund on a recurring basis?
 - a. Ongoing support, hosting and maintenance costs will be funded through the General Fund. The amount has not been determined at this time.
30. 2.2 - How many years hosting should be included in the annual costs?
 - a. For comparison purposes bidders should plan on five (5) years hosting costs. The evaluation committee will look at the initial year costs plus four years of support, maintenance and hosting (State and/or vendor hosting).
31. 2.2 - In an offsite hosting situation, does the ability to process credit cards need to be an internal capability of the solution, or can 3rd party tools be used?
 - a. There is no restriction on third-party tools. All costs must be included in the cost proposal.
32. 2.2 - What are the factors involved in the State determination of whether the State will host the system or whether it will be hosted by the vendor?
 - a. Proposals will be evaluated on technical functionality and costs.
33. 2.2.1.2 - Do you prefer SQL or Oracle?
 - a. Microsoft SQL Server.
34. 2.2.1.2 - Can the State please clarify what existing State Agreements can be tapped? What components options are available through existing State Agreements?
 - a. The State has licensing agreements with a number of database vendors. The standard rates are posted at <http://maine.gov/oit/services/index.shtml>.
35. 2.2.1.3 – It says that the application must support both Microsoft Windows and Apple Mac browser. Can it be one or the other or are we expected to support both?
 - a. Both.
36. 2.2.1.9 - Please expand on your terminology of “providing software assurance guarantees.”

- a. All provided software must include warranties.
37. 2.3.1 - The MDOE mentions that, “the successful bidder will be responsible for ensuring that the solution is thoroughly tested in accordance with the Deployment Certification Policy and undergo all relevant FERPA, HIPPA, and Personal Identifiable Information (PII) certifications through an independent third party assessment”. Can the MDOE provide the name of the independent third party?
- a. The Department does not use any one independent third party. To meet this requirement the bidder must provide a thorough, independent verification that the application system meets all relevant State and federal requirements.
38. 2.3.1 Does the OIT Deployment Certification process apply to vendor-hosted solutions as well as to State-hosted solutions? Which certifications are applicable to a vendor-hosted solution?
- a. The OIT Deployment Certification process applies to vendor-hosted solutions as well as to State-hosted solutions. The applicable certifications for remote hosting will be determined by OIT.
39. 2.3.3.5 - The RFP outlines non-MDOE users who may access the new solution; will all users be authenticated using the same methodology (i.e., through SAML), or should the new solution support hybrid authentication?
- a. Authentication must be in accordance with industry best practices and standards. The Department is currently using SAML authentication with its single sign-on (SSO) portal. This portal will be the entry point for all non-DOE users. The solution may support a hybrid authentication.
40. 2.3.3.14 –What do you mean by row level security? Do you mean field level? Record Level?
- a. Row level security provides more granularity than table level for records in the database system.
41. 2.3.3.15 - Please explain the role security that you are looking for in item 15?
- a. The ability to copy existing roles and access rights facilitates adding similar roles.
42. 2.3.3.18 – Are the auditing requirements at the field level for changes?
- a. Yes.
43. 2.4 - Are there any known data issues with the current MDOE system? Please outline any known issues that may affect conversion.
- a. No.
44. 2.4.2 - Will only one data conversion be involved, e.g. migrating data from the COBOL/UNIX system to the new system or will there be others? If there are additional systems, please detail the name, function, version and other details necessary for vendors to adequately price these conversions?
- a. The only RFP data conversion requirement is from the COBOL/UNIX legacy system.
45. 2.5.1 - Can the State of Maine Department of Education (MDOE) provide more details about what secure access/functionality is expected for degree granting institutions?
- a. The institutions should be able to update recommendations and view data on their own students.
46. 2.5.8 - Can the State please clarify how teacher shortages are categorized (geographically, by subject, by grade, etc.)? How will the new system know what the targets are for each category in order to calculate a shortage?

- a. Teacher shortages are categorized by certification area and calculated by percentage of emergency certifications.
47. 2.5.8 - What is meant by 'link'?
- a. The user should be able to access the Educators for Maine information website from the Educator Credentialing system.
48. 2.5.9 - The RFP states that the new solution will "Provide the ability to integrate with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System data warehouse for data collection, reporting and analysis." Is this envisioned as a data export or is there more to it?
- a. Data export.
49. 2.5.10 - The RFP states "Provide the ability to accept test scores from vendors and transcript files directly into the system." Can the State please clarify how many test score vendors and transcript systems could be involved in this project?
- a. Educational Testing Services is the test score provider. The standard transcript format is the PESC XML standard.
50. 2.5.10 - Are all of the vendors and transcript providers prepared to assist in the development of any data exchange project.
- a. That has not been determined at this time.
51. 2.5.11 - Please elaborate further on the aspect of the processes involved with the automatic issuance of "college recommends".
- a. The degree granting institutions should be able to input their own data directly into the system.
52. 2.5.13 - Does tax compliance/NASDTEC testing need to be an internal capability of the solution or can 3rd party tools be used?
- a. There is no restriction on the use of third-party tools. All costs must be included in the cost proposal.
53. 2.5.13 - Is this one data source or three?
- a. Three data sources.
54. 2.5.13 - Is this just an outside check or is data transferred and stored in credentialing system?
- a. The results are stored in the credentialing system.
55. 2.5.14 - Does the ability to capture fingerprints need to be an internal capability of the solution or can 3rd party tools be used?
- a. There is no restriction on the use of third-party tools. All costs must be included in the cost proposal.
56. 2.5.16 - The RFP states, "Provide the ability to process credit card fees. If the system is hosted by the State credit cards must be processed by Informe (www.informe.org)." Are there any requirements if the system is vendor-hosted?
- a. They must also process credit card fees. As with any financial process, the handling of these fees must meet standard and State accounting practices and allow for a full and complete audit.
57. 2.5.18 - Please provide details on the Fortis document management system as to the desired interface, frequency, one-way vs. two-way, etc. so that adequate pricing can be established.
- a. Information about the Fortis system is posted at <http://www.maine.gov/oit/services/ServiceDescriptions/FORTIS.html>. The use with the new credentialing system has not been determined at this time.

58. 2.5.18 - Can vendors integrate with your current document management and scanning software or do you expect vendors to propose a new document and scanning system?
- a. Bidders may propose to integrate with the current Fortis system. If a bidder is proposing a remotely hosted solution they may propose other document and scanning solutions. All costs must be included as part of the bid.
59. 2.5.19 - What is meant by 'link' in this item?
- a. The user should be able to access the National Board Certification website from the Educator Credentialing system.
60. 2.6 - What report writer software is the State currently using? Oracle Reports, Crystal Reports and/or MS Reporting Services?
- a. Microsoft Reporting Services.
61. 2.6 - How many reports will the State want the vendor to generate (as opposed to those the State would generate)?
- a. The number of reports has not been determined at this time.
62. 2.6.4 - The RFP states that the new solution will "Provide the ability to email and print customizable form letters...." In this case, does "print" mean the ability to actually print a letter from the system's screen, or direct mail, or batch mailings? Please provide a description of what is meant by "print" in this context.
- a. Printing to a local printer, network printer and/or file for e-mail transmission.
63. 2.6.9 – Can the State please clarify the call log requirement and provide a use case?
- a. The system must track and record all activity for auditing purposes including calls made to the certification department.
64. 2.7 – Can the MDOE provide details regarding the requirements (one-way, two-way, frequency) for each interface mentioned in the RFP?
- a. The information is not available at this time.
65. 2.7.2 - Is integration with the SLDS data warehouse system the only interface required to a third party system as part this proposed implementation?
- a. No.
66. 2.8.2 – How many employees does the MDOE expect to be trained during each required training session?
- a. There are eight (8) members of the Educator Certification Program staff plus staff from the sixteen (16) educator degree granting institutions and MDOE administrators, trainers and OIT technical staff.
67. 2.8.2.5 –The RFP states "Provide the ability to meet the State of Maine standards for technical and program documentation." Can the State please provide a copy of these standards?
- a. Online documentation must meet the web accessibility standards in Appendix C.
68. 3.5 - In regards to the Cost Proposal, the RFP states that no more than 60% of the total cost will be allocated to the activities in the Design, Development, and Implementation phases of the project. Are we correct to understand that the remaining 40% may be allocated across both of the final two phases - Acceptance Testing and Production Cutover and Stabilization?
- a. Yes.
69. 3.6 - in the case a vendor has suggested revisions or additions to language in the RFP and all of its contents, where should these revisions/additions be located in the physical proposal?

- a. Proposals may include a section for Bidder Comments.
- 70. 4.2 - How are the post-proposal submission activities (demonstration, etc.) going to be scored if the selected vendor's selection is based on "points" which are not shown beyond those related to the actual submission of a proposal?
 - a. Demonstrations may confirm or change the scoring on the Section 2 requirements at the discretion of the Evaluation Committee.
- 71. 4.3 - Does the requirement of a live demonstration and/or to make the solution available for hands-on tests imply that only COTS applications will be considered?
 - a. No
- 72. 5 - Section 5 jumps from 5.2 to 5.6. Was this intentional?
 - a. Yes, there are no missing sections.
- 73. Have any 3rd party vendors assisted in the analysis, documentation, and/or creation of this RFP? If so can the MDOE name said vendor(s)?
 - a. No third-party credentialing system vendors assisted with the RFP.